

Cleanup, Constraints and Challenges to Hanford Cleanup

More than 30 leaders involved in decisions and operations that affect the future of Hanford cleanup met in a workshop on June 26 at Columbia Basin College in Pasco, Washington, to discuss the leading constraints that hamper progress with Hanford Site cleanup and to identify opportunities to move cleanup forward more efficiently and cost-effectively in the future.

Participants in the workshop included senior officials and representatives from the Department of Energy Richland Operations Office and Office of River Protection, Washington State Department of Ecology, Environmental Protection Agency, Washington State Department of Health, local unions, Hanford Advisory Board, and Hanford Site contractors. The last time such a meeting took place was in 1995.

Prior to the June 26 meeting, workshop participants provided input and perspectives on leading constraints to Hanford cleanup. The workshop provided a forum for discussions on the constraints and recognition of the importance of eliminating barriers to progress. Participants agreed unanimously to collectively tackle four key issues that have the potential to significantly enable Hanford cleanup progress. Those issues include:

- Development of a collective and widely accepted vision of the future end state for Hanford, including the areas where such agreement largely already exists and those areas where the vision still needs major work.
- Renewed commitment to the Tri-Party Agreement as the governing document to Hanford cleanup. Contracts and other important cleanup mechanisms will be aligned with the TPA. The procedures embodied in the TPA provide the flexibility to accommodate the widely accepted vision of the future end state for Hanford.
- Evaluation and appropriate reduction of unnecessary layers of requirements and procedures being applied to cleanup activities.
- Development of an "investment strategy" to ensure national support for vital Hanford cleanup activities.

"This was an inspiring meeting because we are all committed to Hanford cleanup," said Keith Klein, Richland Operations Manager. "By working together on collective issues of importance we can deliver greater progress for cleanup than if we are divided, and that is what we'll be working toward in the next several months." Dr. Harry Boston, Manager of the Office of River Protection, added, "the meeting was important in crafting the future for the Hanford Site, ensuring that our cleanup efforts are working in an effective and efficient manner and aligning to a common vision."

"EPA is encouraged by this joint commitment to move forward with cleanup at Hanford. We recognize that Hanford presents some of our nation's most challenging environmental problems. EPA is intent on working with the Department of Energy, the State of Washington, the tribes, and other critical stakeholders to meet these challenges. We are pleased with the results of the workshop and look forward to renewed cooperation on major cleanup work at Hanford," stated Charles Findley, Regional Administrator, EPA Region 10.

"We have been through a period of instability for many years on issues important to cleanup," said Thomas Fitzsimmons, Director, Washington State Department of Ecology. "We've had meaningful conversations regarding our values for cleanup, and we made a commitment to move forward together to problem-solve and accomplish our cleanup goals, and a year from now we'll assess our progress," said Fitzsimmons.

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